



Figures of Form

Defiant of sculpture as consumable objects, intrigued with the physical immediacy of making and responding, and, at times, the performance of making, searching out the potential of the materials and what is to be done in the time and space of the studio, I create figures. Following a need to represent imagery as well as presenting materials, my figure constructions share many aspects of Arte Povera, art which favours the essential, were it not for my representation. Making and seeing figure forms standing, sitting, hanging around the studio intrigued. Would they serve as mirrors offering glimpses of self and other? By other, at this time, I am not unloading the milieu within literary theory concerning feminist and post-Colonial discourse. In that context, otherness is defined by difference marked by outward signs like race and gender.¹ The self needs the face of the other, the face of difference to tell it what or who it is not. Conversely, the other also requires the self to find meaning.² Arte Povera artist Michelangelo Pistoletto uses the mirror in his work to mark the point of reference on which art rediscovers its own roots to become once again a reason for existence.³ Narcissistic reflection from the water is to some degree a fascinating starting point, and I have found

recognition through observing another illuminating, an outward then inward conversation. Charles Biedermann in his book *Search for New Arts* writes about a similar perceptual crisis:

A perceptual division had become manifest that would prevail throughout the future of Modern Art. It comprised of the conflict between those who appealed to the verbal introversion of literature and those who appealed to the non-verbal extroverted experience of the perceptual world vision.⁴

I take allegiance to neither, appropriate both inward and outward glimpses of living in order to see.

What I see I communicate through the exploration and manipulation of materials, by experiencing work processes, and emphasizing an object from all of its attending material connotations. All abstractions could never ignore the fact that we are always referencing what it is to be human and our relationships to one another; community. These are images with a physical presence with emerging meanings revealed in a visual experience through the actions of making and through the responses of audience whether known or anonymous. I am first audience to my work during the process of making, evaluating, correcting, and scrutinizing each decision.

There are no apologies offered for the work presented, satisfactions are absent, as well. What may exhibit as beautiful may have been discovered as a necessary exorcism of preoccupied thoughts. What portrays as hideous may have been lovingly coaxed into existence from the arid recesses of denial. The work is purely and accurately my energies on these materials in this space and time. These words are impure disclosures into why these works have come into being, yet they are the closest I can conjure.

INmost Substance

After three days of flat out jamming in the studio on four new pieces it was time to approach them with a trenchant point of view, question their existence, their character, look and watch for what was trying to reveal through the logistics of making. I have been audience to my own rough, sketchy sculpture aesthetic for two years, preferring it to calculated attempts to conceal the materials that are doing the work, the scaffolding, whatever it takes to deal with what we all have to deal with - gravity, a majesty I conceded to tearfully at seven years of age when running through the cleared Eucalyptus forest near our home in Southern California. My little body could run, just tear with abandonment and, well, it doesn't take much to imagine,

instead of breaking beyond the limitation of being a tanned two legged little kid intoxicated from inhaling warm air scented with lemon blossoms and earth evaporations and turning into one of those blackbirds with red crescented wings . . . instead of soaring up, I tore at least two plasters worth of knee off. Exactly what I hope to experience in the studio - humiliation, disappointment, anger, acceptance, pain . . . starts to sound like a twelve step programme to quit some error in being, but no! I didn't fly at seven, but I clued-up as to how much further I could venture even after failing.

When one of my pieces goes through failure, as one in particular is right now, I've learned not to reject it but to listen to it. "Why are you still materials I've rescued from the rubbish and not yet art?" And they don't really answer back (I haven't been alone in the studio for that long), but what I get is I've gone too far or not far enough or I've ignored some particular property of the material and I have to correct something about me, not it, because I knew the stuff was capable of art at first sight - before I tried to turn it into something it's not. Let it be what it is. True to its nature. This is what Phyllida Barlow refers to as a rigorous concentration on physical immediacy.⁵

This particular piece that is failing at the moment is my first bust. A remarkable figure drawing session the week previous produced two portraits. I should have seen it coming; the model was new to posing, someone I knew who owned this unusual head, forehead and lips. I have been exploring the figure, figures with minimal features that convey resolve, some psychological condition, an inner core. Most of the time I don't include the figure's head. The skull says so little about character. It's only the tilt of the chin that communicates what is to be recognized, perhaps the cast of the eyes or set of the brow, and here I'm trying to express with my undomesticated approach to working the essence of human being using the traditional bust. There was for a few minutes some success in expression with the piece. The cardboard shifts revealing a gaping mouth - the primordial scream Edvard Munch brought forth? No, I could see the companion laugh to the tormented tragic dramatic



mask. That's what I had failing before me. A mask of Comedy. A mask made from cardboard, wood, wool, string and my new found material, wax. It was looking like a heaping bowl of frosted corn flakes, this facade. Not the pretence of a mask! I ripped off its nose. I walked around the larger-than-life skull tearing off pieces to get inside. I uncovered another mask underneath, this one made of the wool stuffing. This one I could accept. The tenuous appearance of an expression created from the force of the previous subjugation. This approach to making is described by Pippa Cole's observations of Phyllida's work:

An installation (or sculpture) represents the cross-pollination of language symbolic structures and behavioural systems, from the formal to the psychological concocted mash of intuition and rationale. Roots of a decision process are established as an a priori. Barlow has no tangible reasons for these decisions.⁶

The next piece I attended to made itself known to me the minute I picked up two pieces of partially-planed wood. Slightly knobbly, one a little longer than the other, a visual reference slips in - lengthened awkward legs of puberty. Wicked gravity again. How to make it stand, hold a slight weight? Bricolage rather than design is my studio practice. I dismissed the pile of assorted wood pieces I dragged in from the rubbish heap or pinched from the works shop. This piece needed delicacy, something spare but solid. A small cube used as one of four for raising the legs of a table was exactly what I was looking for. Setting the "legs" inside the recess of this cube would give the figure very limited ground, slightly walled, as well, as if some kind of mock protection were to be added to this little patch offered to a long-legged pre-teen.

It worked. The slight cagey forward step of one leg (or perhaps it is an almost indiscernible step backward?) was holding up on the block thanks to the compelling guidance and potent influence of wood glue. Left over wool felt, used to insulate our 500 year old cottage, becomes the body, a technique I used in my postgraduate studio work. String that had been soaked in the day before's coffee dregs and hung to dry overnight binds and defines, something like drawing, knotting a form into existence. Using a thin piece of wood with a carved point to it, I drove a spine into the frail thing in order to work on the shape of standing youth. Giving the piece a long hard look from far across the studio, I could see what editing was needed for this figurative work to ring true with me. "It is impossible to empty the work of apparent intent."⁷ I wrenched the spine out of it leaving the

compressed wool to hold some amount of posture while the top half fell backward, arching. "Bowled over." "Bent over backwards." "Taken aback." "Hosed." Any of these could be the narrative for what I saw in front of me and what was going down in my head.

The third piece is a full size figure and in two parts while I wait for glue to dry. The stride is the action. A stride so rapt I needed to extend the supporting base. There is barely enough to it, structurally, to recognise anything more than the intent - determination. Intent can be such a folly. Angels in Heaven Laughing at the Plans of Man has been an image in my mind for years. Actually making it would be ironic were it not for a recent piece in the studio made a few weeks back. As I was making I noted my thoughts.

Leave it —
It doesn't need structure — the framework
of the willow takes away from
the cardboard's ability.

WAX!
It looks like marble sitting on
cardboard.

Google NIKE LOUVRE.
2 views of exquisite wings. EXQUISITE.
VICTORIAN Wings Icarus' —
failure

How DIFFERENT
Both so BEAUTIFUL

Wax won't hold — need
the coffee stained string

STEIN is LIKE
"and" and "then" and
"therefore."

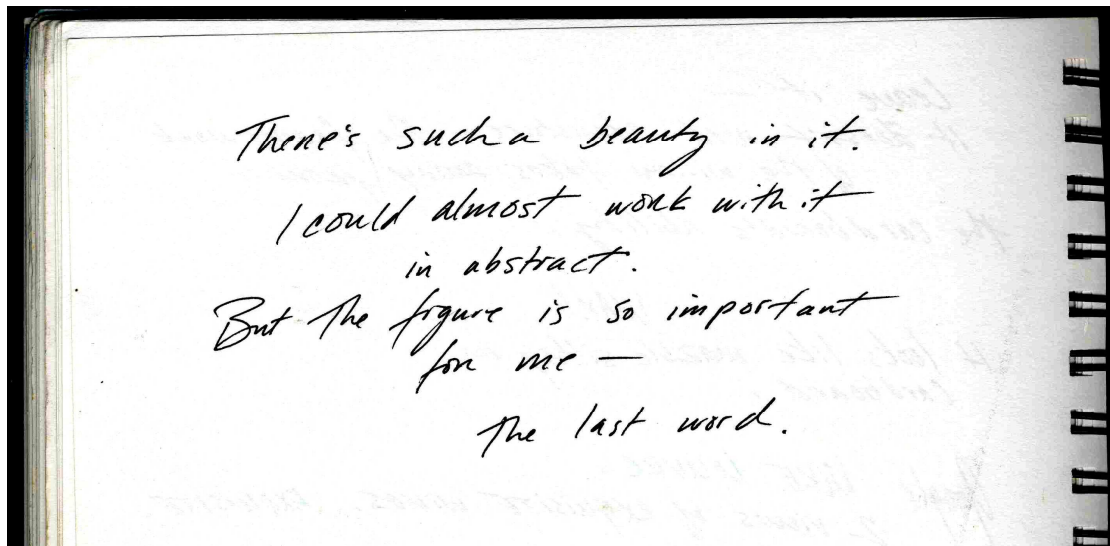
If I've painted at all this year on my sculptures
it's today — in wax — whiteness softly
forming onto cardboard softness.

When it's not right... edit or add?

Leave it — just let it be wrong.

Not wrong — just what it is

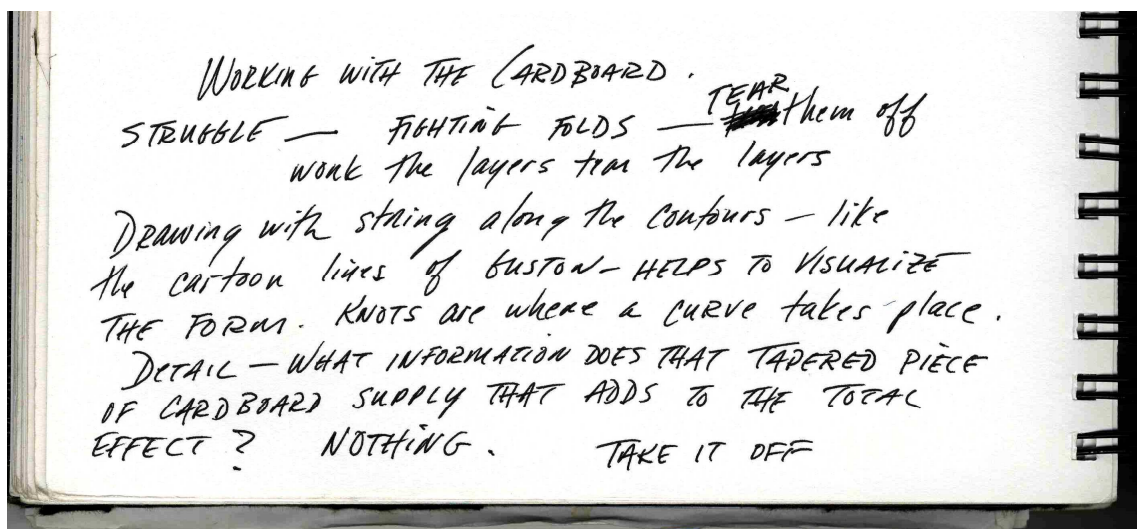
cardboard covered in wax.



THE EXQUISITE DISREGARD

is a piece for exhibition. The figure had earlier been sitting in an installation, an encounter, from my last exhibit. I hauled it up this red ladder symbolic of who knows what and intertwined the two objects then stood way back to learn. It was a fall in progress. A fall from symbolic heights. It needed wings. Wings made from wax. Now that I've made wings I wonder if I should make Angels in Heaven?

Making and writing:





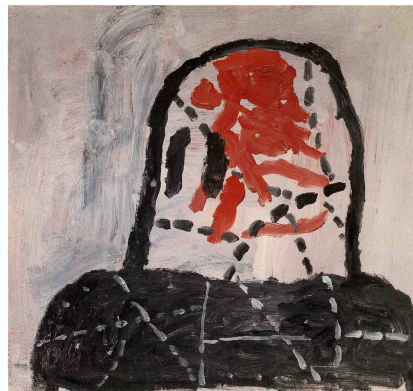
Figuration

I am sitting on a toolbox writing on a piece of board that balances atop a rubbish bin. I glance around my paper and study the small clay figures formed quickly in my hands and positioned, mostly in pairs along the perimeter of the board, to get a sense of relationship – distance. A tabletop *mise en scène* and my intent engagement in nudging the figures bring Philip Guston to mind. Michael Auping writes on Guston and the treacherous crossing he made from the Abstract Expression camp to a return to figuration.

Guston's transition from abstraction back to figurative imagery in the late 1960s and 1970s constituted a grand and provocative synthesis. Characters and symbolic objects appear, disappear, and reappear in Guston's paintings of the 1970s like actors on a stage. The proscenium that had been introduced in such early paintings as *If This Be Not I* of 1945 has opened onto a broad, Beckett-like landscape.⁸



Philip Guston, *Zone*, 1953-54



Philip Guston, *Untitled*, 1969

It was too easy to dismiss Guston's figurative work at first sight. I remember seeing a reproduction of *Blackboard* in my History of Modern Art class at Maryland Institute in

Baltimore. I turned the page without study but it wasn't required. The image was seared into memory bank. The irreverent cartoon-like figurations he was producing in the late 60's was not such a far cry from the Abstract Expressionist painting he was known for in the 50's and earlier 60's, as seen in *Zone*. While he explored a weird, hooligan ruled territory of junk imagery and comic characters, he also explored profound isolation once the art world turned its back on him.



Philip Guston, *Blackboard*, 1969

"When in 1968 Philip Guston abruptly abandoned the most restrained and elegant of all abstract expression painting styles for a mode of raucous figuration, I hated it. It seemed a rank indecency, profanation, a joke in the worst conceivable taste."⁹

The relationship between people and things and how those relationships might somehow be represented on a flat picture plane intrigued Guston more so than the seduction into the metaphysical infinities of the sublime.¹⁰ By the "sublime" Auping is referring to Edmund Burke's concept of the sublime, and man's fear of having to come to terms with limitlessness. Evocations of this eighteenth-century aesthetic and philosophical concept have figured prominently in considerations of Abstract Expressionist painting. For Kant, who acknowledges his indebtedness to Burke in *The Critique of Judgement*, the sublime invokes the idea of boundless and infinite space, whereas beauty is associated with form and limitation. (Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*) Coleridge sees this preoccupation with space as distinctly modern: "The Greeks idolized the finite, and therefore were the masters of all grace, elegance, proportion, fancy, dignity, majesty - of whatever, in short, is capable of being definitely conceived by defined forms or thoughts. The moderns revere the infinite, and affect the indefinite as a vehicle of the infinite; hence their passions, their obscure hopes and

fears, their wanderings through the unknown, their grander moral feelings, their more august conception of man as man, their future rather than their past – in a word, their sublimity.¹¹

Lyotard holds that the task specific to the art of the sublime is to 'approach' matter, to approach 'presence' without having recourse to representation.¹² Toeing Abstract Expressionism's boundaries was the only course an American 60's artist could hegemonically pursue within the graces of current criticism. In a review of Guston's 1960 exhibition at Sidney Janis Gallery, Sidney Tillim wrote, "The restlessness which has infected Guston's style in two previous exhibitions was even more painfully evident here because in attempting to expand within a scheme that logically called for greater anonymity on the part of the artist, he has lost the motivation for painting abstractly at all."¹³ Guston was being accused of punking out.

Speaking to students in 1966, he remarked, "I'm puzzled all the time about what you're asking about. About representation and not.... I mean the literal image and the *not* non-objective...I don't know what non-objective art is. There is no such thing as non-objective art. Everything has an object. Everything has a figure. The question is, what kind?"¹⁴

The figure/objects in front of me as I write are fresh squeezed. Their reason for being is to give them a contact with each other, energy like that found by holding two magnets close together, discovering the point of attraction



or that moment when they repel. This could be studied with objects void of recognition, abstract, surreal, but there is my need for an unearthing of what is human. There on the floor beside me is my allegorical piece for "digging in the dirt"

looking for what Peter Gabriel sings of same title:

[Chorus]

I'm digging in the dirt
Stay with me I need support
I'm digging in the dirt
To find the places I got hurt
To open up the places I got hurt

Two plaster casts of hands partially freed from the clawed clay from which they were made. They affirm that in making the artist has got to go to depths to discover . . . what? That formidable unknown the mirror doesn't show. Guston knew there was no such thing as an empty mirror.¹⁵



Mirror by Richard Goldstein
Courtesy of the John Albert Crowley
Collection

But the light would
not share her, from
behind the bending
mirror

Pulling her within
like a jealous twin.
There was something
in her eye like a
flawed alibi I was
just about to ask,
when she rips apart
her mask

Lyrics by Jim Carroll,
Jealous Twin
from *A World Without Gravity*

Richard writes to me about this work:

Looking back at this "mirror," I cannot see anything else besides my hands moving through some table garbage trying to make it sit up. As to vanity, well, you know me....and as to "negation" and "no such emptiness" I feel there is this incredible negation in my eyes and in my stomach - almost paralyzing me to here*.

-which made me think to some super spotty reading on Jewish Mysticism thumbed through riding subway this past winter. Here is an extract which may be interesting from Gershom Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*

"To know the stages of one's own creative process is also to know the stages of one's own return to the root of all existence . . . It is here [with the *Maaseh Bereshith*, the esoteric doctrine of creation] that Kabbalism comes nearest to Neoplatonic thought of which it has been said with truth that 'procession and reversion together constitute a single movement, the diastole-systole, which is the life of the universe.'" (p. 20)

I just find this curious in terms of "procession/reversion," "diastole-systole," and negation and filling that negation. I by no means present my work as Kabbalist as I know next to nothing of it, just love the troping involved.

In a single movement, an all at once inarticulateness, this must mean a moment of undifferentiation a negation of terms in upsurge. And I feel this mirror was built and articulated out of that chaos, an object of that chaos, which was/is full not empty.

Richard Goldstein 08/09/07

I acquired *Mirror* from Richard's MA submission, 2006 at West Dean College. It was included in the installation displayed in the studio space I would inherit once it had been assessed. The way it was displayed on the wall... I understood it all at once for myself completely with pain and fondness. I had a vanity when I was 13. That returned "other" me looking kept looking, never instructing while criticizing. This form is so familiar to me. You happened upon the piece as you entered Richard's installation. Just a turn of the head and there it was. *Mirror* doesn't reflect. We're told it won't in the blackening, in the international sign of "not", a slashed bar in purple (not too obviously red) positively negates. Then you must question, for certainly Richard rouses questions, "does it negatively negate" the image I know and expect to see in a mirror? What expanse of "I" have I never seen, will never ever see, in a mirror's reflection? Or is that other exactly everything of I?

Tremors of the purely abstract were coast to coast in America during the early 50's. Willem De Kooning in New York was exploring an individual style of figuration using the Abstract Expressionist way of manoeuvring paint. San Francisco was realizing a coherent communal movement, a relaxed collegiality, of returning to the figure which began with David Park. Fellow Bay Area painter Elmer Bischoff referred to the erosion of experimental abstraction as "the end of a love affair."¹⁶ The Bay Area Figurative artists are voided, avoided, or simply overlooked in most of the thickly bound academic books on art history. Diebenkorn's cityscapes or room interiors are most likely to be cited. But it was Park who made the first prescient move in 1951 when he submitted a small figurative canvas to a competitive exhibition and took prized recognition. The astonished reaction of his fellow artists signalled that something dramatic had occurred. At a time when non-objective, abstract painting seemed to be the only possible route for progressive artists, Park's turn to the figure was perplexing, and even enraging. Most of his colleagues saw it simply as a "failure

of nerve," an inability to summon the deep inner resources that contemporary abstract painting was felt to require. Few knew then that Park's "defection" was to be the first of many; still fewer could have guessed that the figurative art it prompted would grow to be one of the most salient post-war developments on the West Coast.¹⁷ Parks and Guston should very well have been bosom buddies. Here are comparable statements from each regarding their reasons for return to the figurative:

Parks: **What the paintings told me was that I was a hard-working guy who was trying to be important...I have found that in accepting and immersing myself in subject matter I paint with more intensity and that the "hows" of painting are more inevitably determined by the "whats."** ¹⁸

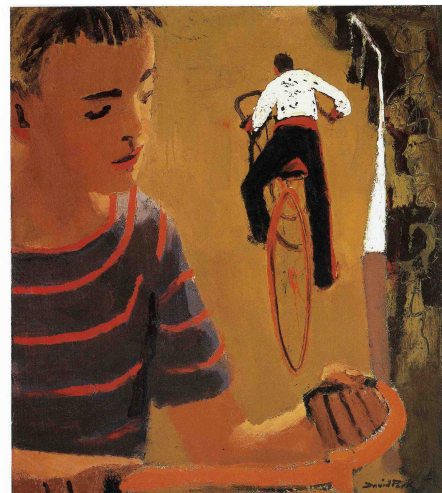
Guston: **Problems of painting became secondary.**¹⁹

Parks: **I believe the best painting America has produced is in the current non-objective direction. However, I often miss the sting that I believe a more descriptive reference to some fixed subject can make. Quite often, even the very fine non-objective canvases seem to me to be so visually beautiful that I find them insufficiently troublesome, not personal enough.**²⁰

Guston: **When the 1960's came along I was feeling split, schizophrenic. The war, what was happening in America, the brutality of the world. What kind of a man am I, sitting at home, reading magazines, going into a frustrated fury about everything – and then going into my studio to *adjust a red to a blue*. I thought there must be some way I could do something about it. I knew ahead of me a road was laying. A very crude, inchoate road. I wanted to be complete again, as I was when I was a kid...I wanted to be whole between what I thought and what I felt.**²¹

BAy Area Figuration

Theophilus Brown began graduate studies at U.C. Berkeley in 1952 after studying in New York and Paris. He met Philip Guston, the Rothkos, and the de Koonings through Thomas Hess in 1950, the year Parks submitted the perplexing *Rehearsal* and *Kids on Bikes*. Brown met Parks in 1955 while teaching at CSFA, commuting with Nathan Oliveira, and sharing studio space with Paul Wonner, Richard Diebenkorn and Elmer Bischoff.



David Park,
Kids on Bikes, 1950

They drew together. They begrudgingly are associated as a movement – The Bay Area Figurative Artists.²² The principle artists were; David Park, Elmer Bischoff, Richard Diebenkorn, James Weeks, Theophilus Brown, Paul Wonner, Nathan Oliviera, Manuel Neri, Bruce McGaw, and Joan Brown.

Bay Area Figurative art had two general characteristics. First and foremost, it pursued a union of figurative subject matter (including all modern representational genres from the nude to still life to portraiture to landscape) with Abstract Expressionist paint handling and formal compositional concerns (such as non-perspectival space and an emphasis on process), combined with a conscious resistance to specific aspects of the Abstract Expressionist ethos (such as the requirement that the artist's personality or subconscious be the source for all imagery). Second the work portrays physical attributes associated with California (such as deep, saturated colors and the play of strong sunlight) and often depicts pastoral or suburban subject matter.²³ Perhaps it is the colour of California that resonates and explains my attraction to this group which has influenced me so greatly. More



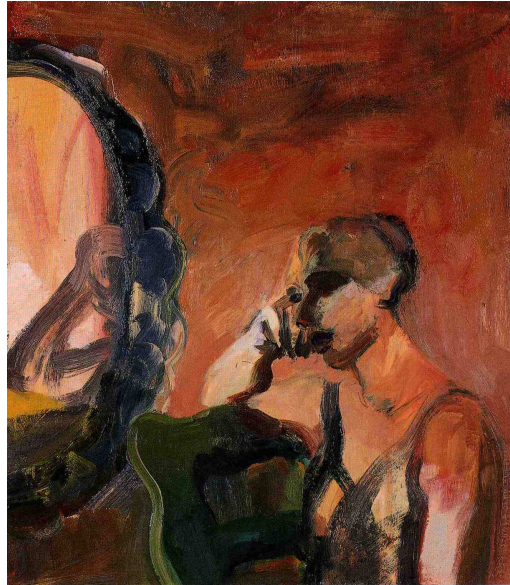
Paul Wonner,
Two Men at the Shore, 1960

accurately it is the life of the paint itself, homage to their inheritance from Abstract Expressionism from which they decisively break, which has me often turning to their works for inspiration. The paint appears more alive than the figures that are depicted, which in turn gives an eternal, haunting, otherworldly life to their subjects.

Although Bischoff jokes about his apostasy with Abstract Expressionism ("Apocalyptic wallpaper", "Drip and drool school") he discovered a process whereby images reveal themselves during the act of painting.

"Preparatory sketches and studies preliminary to making a painting or sculpture," he felt, "were decidedly not part of the

process.” The image would be discovered through painting, but for Bischoff all stages of that process were not to be revealed to the viewer. In dealing with representational paintings,... you’re starting with things that exist externally to oneself, and you’re talking about these things in terms of your response to them...out of your insides. [It’s saying] “Here is something that exists out in the world that I think is worth dealing with, that I have certain responses to, that I have a certain love for, possibly, and I want to show that in a canvas, I want to show my responses to this in the canvas, as opposed to inventing a brand new language.”²⁴



Elmer Bischoff, *Girl with Mirror*, 1961

There was one sculptor from the halcyon days of the bay area – Manuel Neri. His first influences as a student came from Diebenkorn, Bischoff, Weeks, Oliveira, and the late work of David Park, which dictated an involvement with process, color, and the human form.²⁵ The nuances of the materials, mostly junk he’d scrounge around the studio, assembled objet trouvé, or the readymade, catch the gesture of the figure – give it life. Studio mate Joan Brown recalls the fervour in which Neri constructed his pieces:

“Manuel would put on a plaster real fast, take a hatchet real fast, cut that arm off, throw it away and twenty minutes later, he’s got a new arm on there.” Connecting this speed with the Funk aesthetic, Brown recalls the rebellion against “Brancusi slickness and polish” that motivated this “electric ... terrible hurry.”²⁶

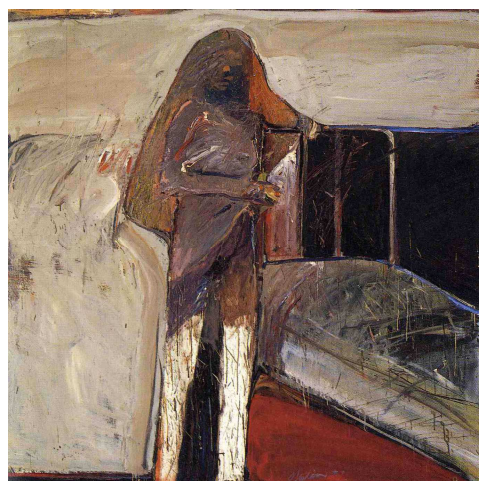


Manuel Neri, *Standing Girl*,
1959

Classical Greek sculpture inspired Neri to remove and omit heads and arms. His aesthetic lineage traces from Michelangelo and Rodin, capturing the intensity of the figure in unfinished fragments. Neri's work has most influenced my own studio work. His interpretation of the rawness found in Rodin's *Balzac* is found in the rasped surfaces of the plaster, hacking and roughing the material until its presence is revealed. The brutality is contrasted with careful smoothing of a shoulder or breast, an approach bearing close to de Kooning's gestures of violence alternated with caresses which synthesize women who emanate through the force of applied paint.

Disturbing but not Disturbed

Neri's aesthetic, influenced by the older Oliveira, can be seen in *Standing Girl*, 1959. There is no vulnerability shown in either of the Bay Area artists' representation of the adolescent girl. The ferocity aesthetic, one of immediacy and wildness (instinctive rather than abandoned), can disturb viewers, bringing suffering, vileness, or torture into the imagination. Missing limbs, headless, vulnerable mien, solitary . . . an aesthetic in the manner of Beckett, Diebenkorn or Giacometti. My last installation, *An Encounter*, projected this misconstrued aesthetic. A visitor to the show approached me during my invigilating duty to congratulate me on my non-verbal demonstration on the horrors of the Iraq War. I had to agree "That was exactly what I meant when I assembled this refugee camp." Of course I was lying. She got something from experiencing the work that was important to her. The very fact

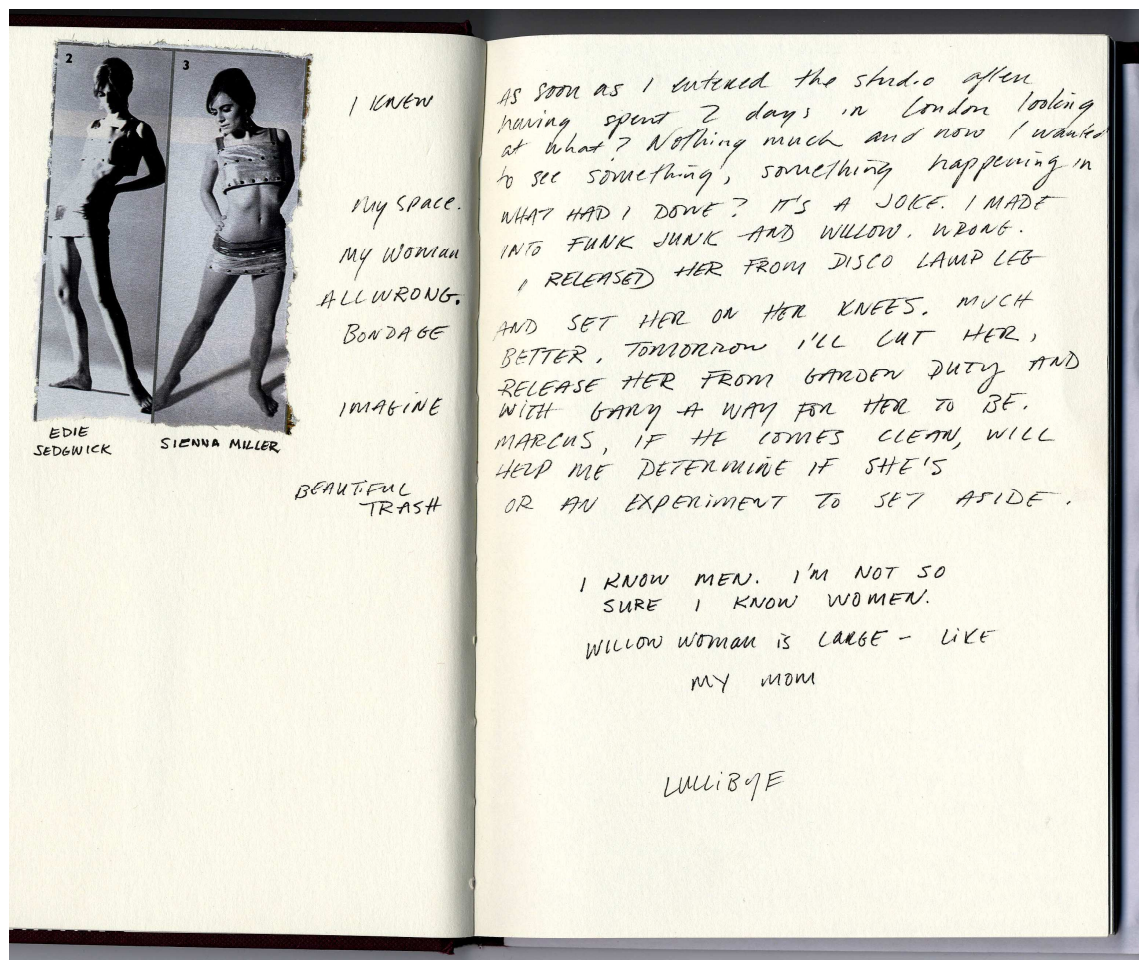


Nathan Oliveira, *Adolescent
by the Bed*, 1959

that she wasn't looking for the satisfactory pleasure of a well crafted product, some decorative doo-dah as an accessory, that she was willing to face the tough stuff of our existence, gave me allowance to entertain this translation. Neri, like de Kooning, also did not see his figures as violent or disturbed:

"No. I don't see them as tortured figures, really. A lot of people say that - that they're frightened by them, that they're Pompeian mummies or what have you . . . I've really wanted . . . intensity with a varied, strong, active surface but as minimal as possible. I was after that." ²⁷

One figure, *Reclining Nude*, detail from *An Encounter*, is a construction from willow rods. Twisting and shaping it from my lap I knew in advance that it must be a woman, a female after having created four male figures. The torso was developed enough and the attitude, her reason, what kind of presence she was to command was yet to be discovered. I thought she should stand so as to get a look at her. I used articulating lamps which were close at hand to act as base and legs, guiding the sections through to form feet, shins, and thighs. Standing back to scrutinize I had to laugh. She's dancing! My notes from a sobering return to the studio:



It was the lamps themselves that I objected to. Dancing, the dance of life, Matisse - all that was fine in my mind. It was simply the dominating force of man-made objects which had their own story, their own narrative, aesthetic, which I found intolerable in my work. Making willow samba legs was out of the question. That would be enforcing my *will* on the materials. Guston is quoted on this objection:

"A thing is recognized only as it comes into existence. To will a new form is unacceptable, because will builds distortion. Desire, too, is incomplete and arbitrary."²⁸

I didn't know what this woman was all about so I set her aside placing her onto the stack of wool felt sheets, raw materials that I had laying in my studio space. There she came to rest and what needed to be done for willow legs was just waiting for me to recognize and materialize. Working with willow rods is like contour drawing. The minimal gesture of a turned line is all that is needed to suggest. She is incompletely finished, reclining, legs spread apart. She is absolutely suggestive. She represents something archetypal rather than allegorical, unlike my winged figure. As Marina Warner has pointed out, when we see a male figure on a pedestal, we ask Who is it? While a female prompts the question What does it *represent*?²⁹ She is womanhood, sexual, maternal, poised for delivering what she can reproduce, for delivering what she has promised. Light in materials, she is heavy in connotations.



Karen Gardner, *Reclining Figure*, 2007

A less immediate form of three dimensional drawing is forging and welding steel rods. It's a slower process but the searching for recognition of the form is nonetheless the same. Metal has an invincible quality to it, hardly a material to express human tenacity against our failings. I banged the heated metal to remove its manufactured state of exactness. The surface burnt from over forging, sign of a novice with metal and fire. From the pieces of twisted rods I found a hip and a foot. With a minimal number of pieces I assembled a figure solid in material but with posture waning in its ability to hold itself up, connotative of aging and gravity's effect. Relying on the balance of one join this sculptural piece stands defying whatever forces are in play to take it to its knees. This is one construction from this year's work that will not disintegrate in any short time, unlike the cardboard.

Ubiquitous Cardboard

Discarded cardboard - I am attracted to humbleness of this material, its homogenised colour, suppleness that can approach sturdy leather, its availability and overlooked status as a choice of sculpture material, especially with forming a figure. Notes from working with the cardboard:

Ripping Tearing Cardboard Crunching
Changing its manufactured state to worn leather —
Bruised Peach Skin
Finding contours the way a dress is made
Cardboard is a word like "is"
Struggle - fighting folds - tear them off
work the layers tear the layers
Keep it fresh - not too complete, finished.
Hurried - There it is a gaping mouth
in mock laughter let it laugh.
What joke does it know that I could use?
There's no way to make it what I wanted
I just have to go with what happens.
Using glue - the tape won't hold it
long enough to take a picture.
Studied the image on camera display.
So far away from the drawn
portrait head.
A huge terrorized Bellow.

My method of
using
cardboard
held with
pieces of
tape is as
fragile as
promises, is
as droll as
humanity's
ambitions.

Robert Rauschenberg referred to cardboard as "a material of waste and softness," thereby alluding to the ubiquitous function and disposability of this material in capitalistic consumer culture on the one hand, and to the quality of organic flexibility and suppleness for sculptural purposes on the other. The artist wrote:

A desire built up in me to work in a material of waste and softness. Something yielding with its only message a collection of lines imprinted like a friendly joke. A silent discussion of their history exposed by their new shapes. Labored commonly with happiness. Boxes.³⁰

Rauschenberg's cardboard series, made in 1971, during the same time and under possible influence of Arte Povera, uses the materials in their found state, as his earliest oeuvre, but, like Arte Povera, shares a visual banality. Denuded of pretence, the cardboard challenges the viewer to accept its basic presence, to shift their paradigm from significance to experiencing the sensation of its being. Rather than seeing "just" cardboard, Rauschenberg gives us the allure of these material heaps which previously had no hope of return.



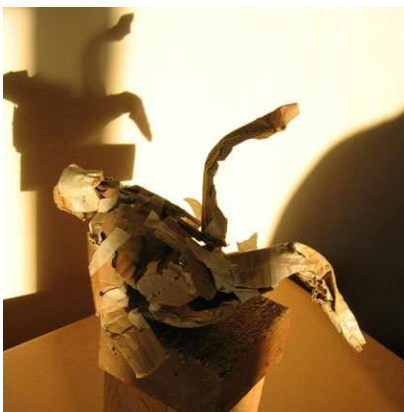
Robert Rauschenberg, From the Venetian Series, 1973

Some of the simple assemblages of tar, paper, burlap, rope, wood, and metal, in addition to the still-dominant cardboard, are poetic impressions of Venice, a city whose decaying

beauty struck a cord with Rauschenberg's own aesthetic. A wooden branch suggests a gondolier's pole, or a post emerging from the canal; loosely hanging fabrics resemble the draperies the artist admired in cafes along the Piazzo San Marco.³¹

Most of Rauschenberg's cardboard works are titled based on the product shipped in the box and indicated by its label or hand notations which are evident and untouched. They are untitled in the *Early Egyptian* series. The *Venetian* series, however, provide narratives through their titles, and allow reflection. Titling was the very place where Guston began his departure from the Abstract Expression paintings. Images and titles that challenged the abstract nature of Abstract Expressionism emerged in Guston's search to locate a "recognition." What Guston called "the weight of the familiar."³² Rauschenberg may have been mostly reflecting on the materialism and disposability of modern life alluded by taking the cardboard in hand and into the studio, but his titles bear more to what he discovered through the working. There are two sand-cast bronze, hand painted sculptures from the *Cardbird* series. *Cardbird II* intonates a bird as it approaches landing using seven pieces of cardboard. *Cardbird III* has less figuration of a bird, however, with the "TURKEYS" content label and "AIRBILL ENVELOPE" packet assisting in the "bird" connection. They are the only pieces that Rauschenberg took to the permanence of bronze. I would like to think that he abandoned that idea of making to return to the natural state of the soft, degradable cardboard. Perhaps bronze didn't square with his propaganda of social awareness; an individual's responsibility for the garbage produced through the machine of capitalism.

The temporary nature of cardboard is problematic for galleries, investors (God, save the conservators), for any part of the art industry. Documentation with photography, use in video, books, and the translation of the work to bronze



Karen Gardner,
Maquette, 2007

are the only ways to retain some experience with the work over time and to keep an artist out of impoverishment. Working directly from the model I created several cardboard maquettes while my fellow studio mates painted. The maquettes possessed a liveliness, a closeness in representation to the figure's pose, a "knowing" of the body's articulation and manner. They were done well within the allotted time of half hour,

leaving out the error of overwork. The tape gave after several months of temperature change and handling and I returned the blooming creatures to the rubbish bin from where



Karen Gardner, Maquette,
2007

they first emerged as the raw stuff. At first it was a bit sad to see them sitting on top of the trash, kind of flayed, disregarded. Then I saw the sublime state of us mortal creatures, what Nabokov in *Invitation of a Beulah Girl* rebels against – that our “existence is but a brief crack of light between two eternities of darkness.”³³

Fragile Creatures

Alberto Giacometti's work was temporary. But it was more than the temporary he was seeking. He shared with Samuel Beckett not only the streets of Paris but the accomplishment of failure. Giacometti was obsessed with capturing a fleeting image of a figure, not frozen in plaster, but flickering in a momentary passage of time. The transient image in his mind was elusive and his failed attempts to apprehend this vision led to his destroying the endeavours.

“It doesn't matter whether I fail or I succeed,” he remarked, echoing a sentiment often expressed by his friend Samuel Beckett. “In fact, failure and success are the same thing.”³⁴

To Jean-Paul Sartre as quoted in Sartre's first essay on Giacometti, *The Search for the Absolute*, 1948, Giacometti explains why he had just destroyed some statues:

“I was satisfied with them but they were made to last only a few hours.”³⁵

It is very much like the first drawings made during a modelling session in warm-up where you coordinate the eye to arm to fingers through the toes or the seat of the pants. The charcoal goes down on the paper with an urgency, quick glances back and forth from model to paper in the few seconds a pose is given. Another pose, charcoal snaps and crunches underfoot. No time to turn



paper pad or slap on another clean piece. You wipe down the last image and begin again. And then again and again. It's not the drawing you want but an internalizing through a physical expression of what you are experiencing. If I want to understand something I see, I draw it and then it becomes known to me. Giacometti's sculptures were sketches. His are studies involving man's "being" within our *presence*, rather than the assumption of character through *pretence*.

Sartre's essay on Giacometti coincides with Giacometti's exhibition of sculptures at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York. The exhibit was the first in fifteen years and he presented his sculptures translated into bronze. He, like Rauschenberg, had reservations over the decision to make permanent the work.

He writes to excuse himself: "It is mainly because I don't want to be thought of as sterile and incapable of achieving anything, as a dry branch almost; then too, it is from fear of poverty (which my attitude could very well involve), that I have brought these sculptures to their present point (in bronze and photographed) but I am not too happy about them; they represent something of what I intended just the same – not quite."³⁶

He accepts the bronze representations only in the fact that they approach, yet also fail, his goal of finding in materials the transience of our own existence.

The aesthetic I share with Guston, Neri, and Giacometti is often considered grotesque, although that is not always the intent, except in the case of Guston. Guston moved from a well established lyricism in Abstract Expressionism to coarse figuration –

No more 'beautiful' pictures for the sake of credibility. 'Bad' painting for the sake of story-telling. Painting that articulates its proximity to caricature, so as to be able to bring violence, wit, politics and the grotesque into play. And finally, self-inflicted restriction so as to be finally free of those outside restrictions that an academically-neutered Modernism, its public and critics demanded of an artist like Guston. The 'dark pictures' were an important indispensable lesson in a process of liberation, since they allowed the artist to reach a point where the crude, violent and simplified style of the late works was to a certain degree anticipated.³⁷

Free to terrorize, Guston's images of hooded Klansmen, armed with an attitude of easy disregard, cruise around hometown USA pointing fingers at their next victim. They are almost benign in their masks, going about their business of racking up a body count which the piles of shoes or legs signify. They do their work openly – in their cartoon convertibles. The subject is repugnant, but Guston is using it to point his own finger. Not impervious to his own self-criticism, the finger points to the hooded artist at his easel.

Guston's images of hooded protagonists were variously too personal and generally too subversive, sliding under the radar of Pop art's sparkling media-based theatrics.³⁸



Philip Guston, *Edge of Town*, 1969

Guston's work is intensely personal under the guise of characterization. His handling of paint was also estranged from Pop's mass production techniques. The desertion from Abstract Expressionism, Abstract Expressionism itself, could not mask his assiduous study of the Old Masters, and later Cezanne, de Chirico,

Picasso, Leger, and Beckmann.³⁹ Close friend Dore Ashton tracks Guston's literary influences which include Kafka and Samuel Beckett.⁴⁰ Guston quoted Kafka as saying:

The books we need are the kind that act upon us like a misfortune, that makes us suffer like the death of someone we loved more than ourselves, that make us feel as if we were on the verge of suicide or lost in a forest remote from all human adaptation. A book should serve as an axe for the frozen sea within us.⁴¹

Guston sees pain, or at least frustration, as the reward in art. "Satisfaction is nothing."⁴² This remark would resonate with Giacometti.

San Fran Bay Area painter Nathan Oliveira studied with the great German Expressionist, Max Beckmann who taught at Mills College in the summer of 1950 and found Abstract Expressionism "amooosing" and whose primary word of advice was always "more bleck." Beckmann's encouragements to the young Oliveira were most forthcoming during the use of a model:

"When I painted the model I forgot about inventing a powerful statement, German Expressionist statement – figures with masks.

When one dealt with reality, that's when he [Beckmann] became enthused.... But when I found myself getting more subjective and inventing a world purely from my imagination that interested him much less."⁴³

We are reminded by the study of the model of our humanism; susceptible to gravity, vanity, vulnerability, seeing what is seen by the other; sensitive to our allure, power, aging ... there are stories and testament enough in the tilt of a head to puzzle over. Pondering over our flesh and blood, our tenuous state of mind, our mortality ... what would be the purpose of fantasy, entertainment, escapism? What do they do to shake us out of complacency, that anaesthetized sleepwalk that passes time "pleasantly" or "amusingly" ?

The Absurd Theatre of the 50's and 60's strove to instil the lost sense of wonder and primal angst by shocking man out of an existence that is depleting and automated. Playwright Samuel Beckett confronts the limits of the human condition and his works have had considerable impact on the artists I look to for inspiration. The situation of man in this world through Beckett's characters and stage set are out of kilter with nature. Isolated, alone, contemplative, the placement of the sole figure or engaged figures on the stage or in the pictorial, studio, or gallery space, expresses the enigma of modern man.

Spatial Relationships

I'm studying the 20 pairs of miniature figures on my rubbish bin table top again. Without clearing away the entire playing field of all but two figures, I can't focus on any particular encounter, or engagement. They are a mass of pairs with one or two occasional single stragglers. The Hayward Gallery is currently hosting Antony Gormley's exhibition and I am reminded of his clay figurines, 35,000 in total, from the 2005 *Field* installation. The miniature terracotta pieces are a substitute world which comes from this world, filling the entirety of a gallery floor with a swarm of humanity. A celestial element is central in the present exhibit, *Blind Light*. Seeming to defy gravity, Antony's *Matrices and Expansions* series are figures which emerge from fractals of stainless steel disclosing their form as the viewer moves around them in their exhibited state of suspension. Only their shape is revealed, certainly not their determination. Encountering them is like the scene out of Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* where the astronaut's exploration takes him to his own condition in the future. He sees himself alone, amongst the signs of success - fine fabrics, comfort,



a breakfast served, but alone, which is amplified by the apparatus assisted breathing of the observing earlier self, the searching astronaut.

Antony Gormley,
Matrices and Expansions,
2006

The importance of distance in Giacometti's work is included in Sartre's essay:

In frontally opposing classicism, Giacometti has restored an imaginary and indivisible space to statues. In accepting relativity from the very start, he has found the absolute. This is because he was the first one to take it into his head to sculpt man as he appears, that is to say, from a distance, as the painter does for those who live in his canvas. He creates his figure "at ten paces," "at twenty paces," and whatever you do, there it stays.⁴⁴



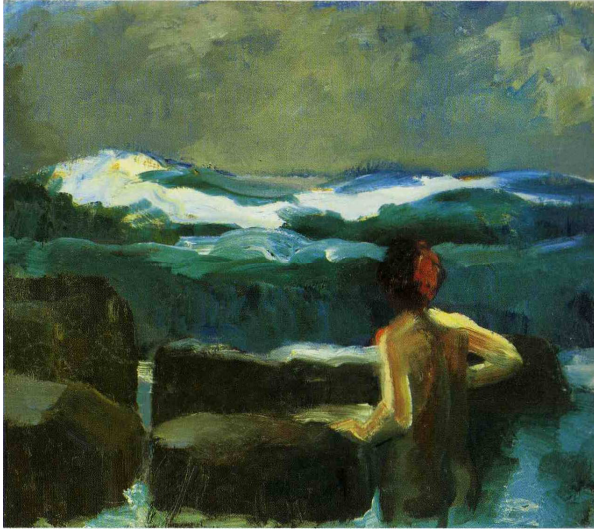
Giacometti's portrait of Jean Genet, 1953, is a painting of a man but the subject is not a portrait of the man so much as it is a portrait of the space which holds the man in isolation. The sketchily painted border removes this figure from the viewer. We are not allowed inside this space. We may gaze at the man in his setting and we will see not his portrait of his external being but the internal self stripped of all pretence, reduced to the simplest scratchy paint marks to define his form, his space, his condition.



Alberto Giacometti, Portrait of Jean Genet, 1954

The Bay Area Figurative Artists were keenly aware of how the figure and the environment relate to one another. With the exception of Milton Avery and perhaps Horace Pippin, not since Matisse's figures, such as in the painting, *The Blue Nude*, 1907, has the figure been one and the same with nature. Harmonious. As though industrialization, mobile phones, expulsions, were no where on the horizon, under foot or looming.

Elmer Bischoff's *Breakers*, 1963, casts extraordinary light on the shoulders of the wading figure as on the breaking surf. The light may be from the moon or the bright artificials from a nearby pier just outside the picture plane. The size of the surf and its curl along with the deep trough and following surf, larger still, explains the careful stance of the

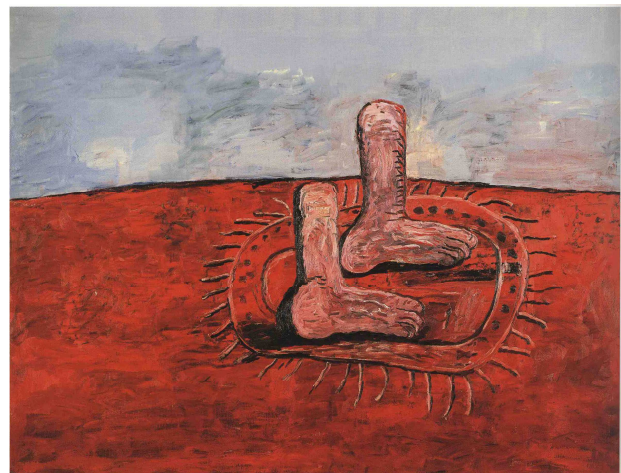


Elmer Bischoff, *Breakers*, 1963

bather. The figure stands thigh deep in the shallows behind rocks, their lit arms and shoulders braced for the pound and pull of what might be an undertow. We see the back of his (or her?) head, their eyes set on the breakers to ascertain his position as being safe enough. The colour that comprises the figure is drawn up straight from the

sea water, reflects the rocks and the ocean itself and has the slightest red glow on the horizon, the same red that charges the man's hair and defines a shoulder.

Guston's *Feet on Rug*, 1978, demonstrates a fantastic expanse within its two dimensions. It's a surprising piece for a viewer with no knowledge of Guston's inheritance from the Masters. The stumped feet, developed with hatch marked contours, are planted, like a surfer's, on the fringed rug they ride in the direction of the horizon which is miles away from the frontal plane. A feat accomplished with a minimal palette.



Philip Guston, *Feet on Rug*, 1978

The failure in my last installation was to ignore the distance of the viewer to the figures, concentrating instead on the relationship between the figures and the framing of a visiting viewer amongst the figures. As my first critic, I stand a good distance from the figures as I make them then adjust and correct until they come to be. That was the distance they needed to be experienced by the viewer, less so

the work seen as a *mise en scène*. When it was time to dismantle the constructed scene I removed the gauzed fabric that created the ceiling of the room. The draping separated the figures from each other which presented a more satisfying way of experiencing the work. "Catacomb" replaced "tent" and



Karen Gardner, *Encounter 1*, 2007

the sculptures became more like archetypes rather than victims of war, as previously interpreted. Removing a dozen staples changed their relationship, placing some in isolation and reframing pairs with their respective dynamic.

I imagine these pieces and their retirement to natural surrounds. Nature will take them back leaving a few screws to survive while the wood, cardboard, wool and cotton enter the earth and decompose. The Ashdown Forest, near my home, has moments of clearing where a rambler may come across them and identify them as art - as, like the hiker, contemplative, solitary.

Restricted colour

With the exception of red, the colour palette of my sculptures and their surrounding are limited to the warm browns of the cardboard, coffee stained cotton string, beige masking tape, wood with signs of unearthing, silvery greys of skip-rescued aluminium tin sheets with rusty drips indexical

of their earlier use for the college boiler, and the tactile wool felt, grey and dirty for no use in the garment industry. Charcoal black may appear as a consequence of a scrawled note. The red, a bright contrast, is all I will allow in solving the problems of sculpture.

Rauchenberg confined himself to the monochrome of cardboard where only the occasional printed lettering in red or black is seen along with the stains, tears, dents and marks given to the material during its life history. The works are visually incongruous to his early assemblages, painted constructions, of riotous colour to inspire the pop artist, yet from the soul of an Abstract Expressionist. With *Cardboards*, he allowed the material to be true to its nature. By not embellishing it, the cardboard remains humble, retaining its subservient purpose in our culture.

It's straightforward in understanding that colour's addition to sculpture adds a narrative that may subvert the primary interests of engaging space and wrestling with dimension and structure under the effects of gravity. This is not exclusive to three dimensional works. Guston's paintings in his late Abstract Expressionism explorations, which began to venture into the forbidden territory of image, were due to his interest in structure created through a limited palette.

While working on the 'dark pictures' from 1961 to 1965, Guston had, as he himself noted, reached a point where painting had become 'crucial'. He had advanced to its most elemental state, by eliminating all painting's seductive means such as the use of color. The alternate application of black and white paint led to a process of mutual erasing, whereby the paint became amassed into various gray tones. It was a continual trial of strength from which, in the end, form and arrangement emerged. And, in fact, these paintings lacked any kind of virtuosity in its conventional sense. They are a result of a restriction he inflicted on himself, not so as to sound out the limits on his capacities, but so as to experience the inner essence of the painting process – how does form, how does a picture originate?⁴⁵

This is the same challenge undertaken by Giacometti in both his sculptures and paintings, whether intentional or predicated upon lack of funds for an extended palette. Using white, black, ochre, and red (occasionally and sparingly), he "carves" out his mostly seated figures from the canvas. Their appearance comes into recognition through the scumbled ochre background by dashing staccato brush movements made in black and white.

The dialogue between inner and outer perceptions for me, at this time, should remain basic. Monochromatic representation is a candid approach to this challenging endeavour.

Valuing Your Rubbish

Bricolage describes my studio practice, starting with putting two pieces of found wood together and seeing where it takes me. I'll seize hold of whatever my eye falls onto to solve joins and balance in the literal sense. Often a solution is in the trash. This applies figuratively (as in speech), as well. While my hands formulate things, my head is formulating thoughts, usually churning over some difficulty instigated in personal relationships - getting to the bottom of the barrel where Matisse claimed there is truth. The difficulties in an artist's work must be the realizations of self, those painful hours of closing the gaps between what we think we are, who others think we are and what we are. We are material no different than the substances gathered and assembled. The psychological closet is just waiting to be scrounged for use, if only we are willing to take a look.

This morning I entered the studio to find my new piece, a striding figure, fallen. Good! Another failure. What went wrong? It was the ankle. It had been attached to the thin platform from the side. Not enough contact. So I drilled and screwed in the ankle from the top of the platform not just deviating carpentry skills, being astonishingly negligent of such craft in order to pin the leg down. The direction of the stride was altered. Now I had to remove part of the base that defined the direction and length of the stride, a funky assemblage of connected pieces of board that no longer met with the leading leg. On top of that, in sawing off the extraneous bit of base, I lost a directional shape that gave dynamic to the stride. I missed that. To return it, and now to steady the base that never could do the job to begin with (I learn now), I angled some bits of wood to the base between the stride. Standing back, I could see it. The stash of wood nearby, in reach to appropriate in an instant, trailed behind my figure in a wake. A few additions and deletions was all that was needed to express this act of making in a reflexive manner - a progression of wood to sculpture.

Also at hand is the use of the computer. We avail ourselves to a plethora of images and information nearly everyday. A message goes out and a reply returned by friend, colleague, tutor, a supplier, it's become part of studio practice. A lesser known feature available is voice recognition, an

extension of Word that is still in development. The inaccuracies of the application, a rubbishing of what a speaker says, submits a re-interpreted text which is often found to be intriguing, humorous, or confounding. I first began projecting the text into my sculpture environments as another material, another layer, another way of communicating. Ambient noise and the viewer's conversation, are captured through a microphone, translated to text through this voice recognition, and projected onto the scene in front of the viewer. The text is partially recognizable as their own input (the application is trained to my American female inflection), but the effect is phrases constructed into grammatical structure scrolling upward and across surfaces as sound is picked up by the microphone. The words become part of the visual environment. The spectator becomes involved in the *mise en scène* in the form of intervention. The meaning is constructed by the viewer.

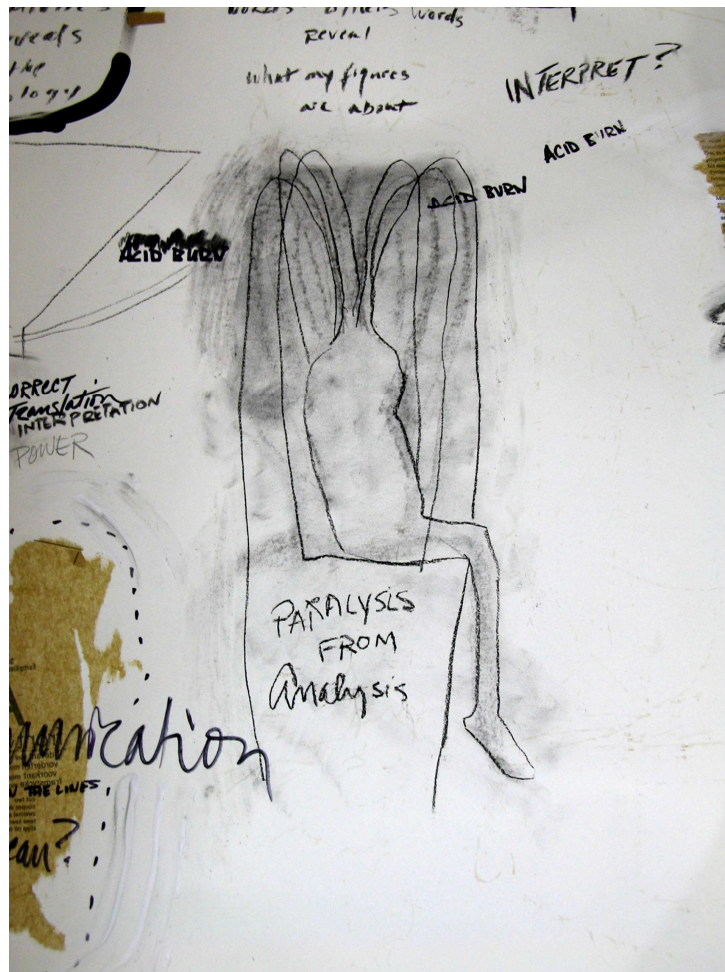
A difficulty in this set-up, however, is in the nature of exposing audiences to works of art in a gallery or exhibition set-up. There is no problem during the throng of opening night where voices are robust in greetings and congratulations. The difficulty is in the quietness of the following exhibition days. A gallery is still a place of revered ponderings, whispers, and closed thoughts. Anticipating this challenge, I exposed dozens of would-be attendees through experimental groups. An informed audience is valued.

At the close of the show it was clear that too much force was being applied to this found material of projected voice recognition using participation from an audience. This returns to Guston's statement of "willing a new form" and the resulting distortions. Yet there is still something to be used with this resource that can produce volumes of natter matter, what I often refer to as "my poetry generator."

Having first been interested in the notion of communications, specifically in body language communicating more clearly than the spoken word, I came upon the term "metacommunications." Metacommunication is a form of communication that means different things at different levels presented simultaneously. It is up to the receiver in the communication process to work out which level in this complex signalling is the *real* message.⁴⁶ Coincidental to my study on this theory was an introduction to the sculptural work of Juan Muñoz.

Muñoz was very interested in involving the audience in the Tate Modern's 2001-2002 Unilever commission. *"The spectator becomes very much like the object to be looked at, and perhaps the viewer has become the one who is on view."*⁴⁷ It was a visual, or experiential, metaphor for the paradox of metacommunication. It was in fact entitled *Double Bind*, a

communication term coined by researcher George Bateson in formulating a theory about relationships and what happens when important basic relationships are chronically subjected to invalidation through paradoxical communication.⁴⁸ Yet to discover is *why* Muñoz was interested in this theory. I have to trash this train of thought where my own work is involved, dismissing the audience as active players in communication layered upon the installation, and look again into what is the nature of speech translated into a visual medium.



Paralysis from Analysis

Words can be like painted canvases. Comprehending the intent can be subjugated to the experience of the words themselves. If I learned anything from my three test audiences it was that there was an engagement with the words that were returned from the participant's own voice. What began as frustration, such as repeating a phrase in hopes of eventually getting a match, advanced to fascination in the phrase that resulted (the program will return grammatically structured sentences based on the logic of the application and the user dictionary using sound input and translation from training - see Word: Tools/Speech/Training). Nearing

Karaoke, the entertainment value of the test was in actuality the value. In one test group the analysis of what was expected was abandoned for dancing with red Ariel text scrolling on our bodies translate what it would from the music and song which we advanced from the background to predominant levels. Following is an example of a script which has been read exactly as written (left) and the resulting "translated" transcript (right):

That white noise in my head. An aviary of yesterday's conversation; my speculations squawking, echo, feedback, words reverberating. That stray hair is yelling. The advancing second hand, it's all too loud. No cushions of a filter nor absorbing judgement to parse the chatter into sense. Please, some music, T.V., any talking wallpaper to drown the cacophony. No. Wait. I prefer that psycho alphabet soup.

The white noise in my head and apiary of yesterday's conversation by speculations squawking back no feedback words reverberating that stray hair is telling the dancing second and it's all too loud no provisions of the filter nor exorbitant judgment parse the chatter distance please some music TV any talking wallpaper to drown the cacophony no weight I prefer that cycle alphabet soup

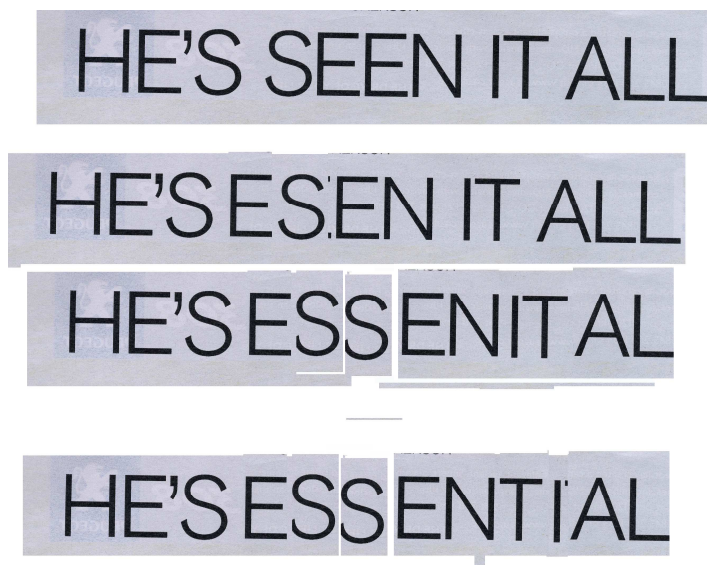
Looking beyond projected words as entertainment or a decorative medium, I turn to other word usages in the field of aesthetics. Speech recognition "fails" to the degree where meaning is lost or confounded which opens an avenue for imaginative interpretations. John Gibson, in his article on critical interpretation, examines the shift in emphasis from the *meaning* the language of a text tries to convey, to the *imaginings* it prescribes.⁴⁹ His discussion involves literary encounters which rely on text representing objects, an "aboutness", that is missing from my automated speech translations. He would refer to my projections as "a continuous string of empty representations." Fabrication.

There is something still to be gleaned here in my endeavours. If I am to agree with Guston's fundamental belief that we are "image-makers and image-ridden,"⁵⁰ I have to ask myself, "does this work with text, departing from meaningful language (a symbolic sign object), enter the realm of abstraction within abstraction?" Am I delving into the world of Dada? Concrete Poetry? Fluxus? Arte Povera? Is there a neat placement for speech recognition in these early phases that can share philosophical musings, critical analysis, experiential descriptions with other artists that use words in their work?

During the Zurich Dada movement, 1916-19, a state of mind was created that produced free word association poetry readings drowned in the din of noise machines, nonsense lectures, paintings and collages arranged according to laws of chance. Ambient noise, unclear pronunciation, flaws in technology, these all add up to chance playing into the use of voice recognition to some degree. This alternative presentation of unintended text, where meaning must be imagined rather than given, where words are automatically manufactured could arguably be an extension of concretism. George Maciunas explained:

Concretism is a simple term, it means the opposite of abstraction. The Ready-Made is the most concrete thing. John Cage extended it to Ready-Made sound, noise, George Brecht and Ben Vautier extended it to Ready-Made actions, like turning on the light.⁵¹

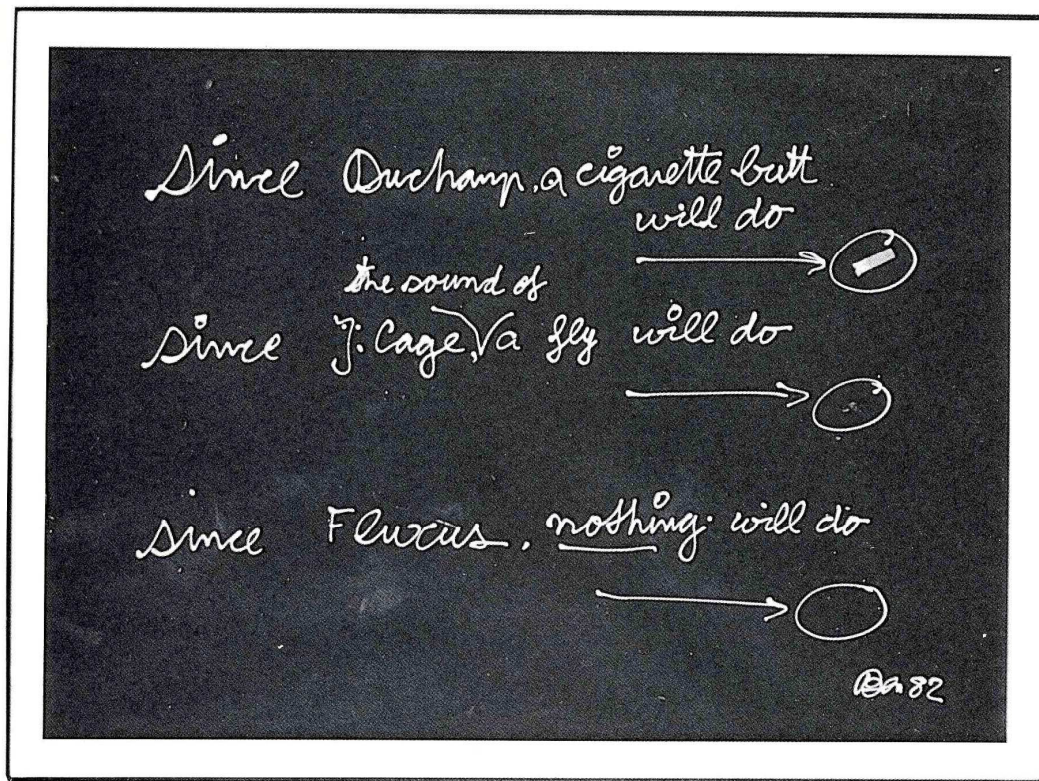
Concrete Poetry is more self conscious than the randomness of Dada. It's focus is often on typography to underline the volatility of language. My own recent experiment in this word art:



When I first saw the magazine headline which was printed as "He's seen it all", I read it as "He's essential", which may be due to an "already listening" - my own filters working subconsciously. Using Photoshop to collage the letter order, the misread becomes a visual concrete poem. These technical elaborations were considered avant-garde within the Fluxus movement, as well, which sought to be more socio-political than Dada. I have used voice recognition text projection for these purposes, but again, the word imagery seemed better

suited for visual poetry than some eco-friendly graffiti mangled into incomprehension.

The idea of concretism and noise comes from Futurism and Russolo. Ready-Made comes from Marcel Duchamp. Collage from the Dadaists. They all end up with John Cage.⁵²



My favourite of all of John Cage's quotes is "I think a definition of art could be 'paying attention.'"⁵³ Words, the relationship between objects, the space they occupy, solutions to problems, the language of action, all these things we as artists, as humans, notice to add to our life experience and to our studio practice. Revealing results is all that I am searching for. Am I alone here in this material usage of translated speech projection?

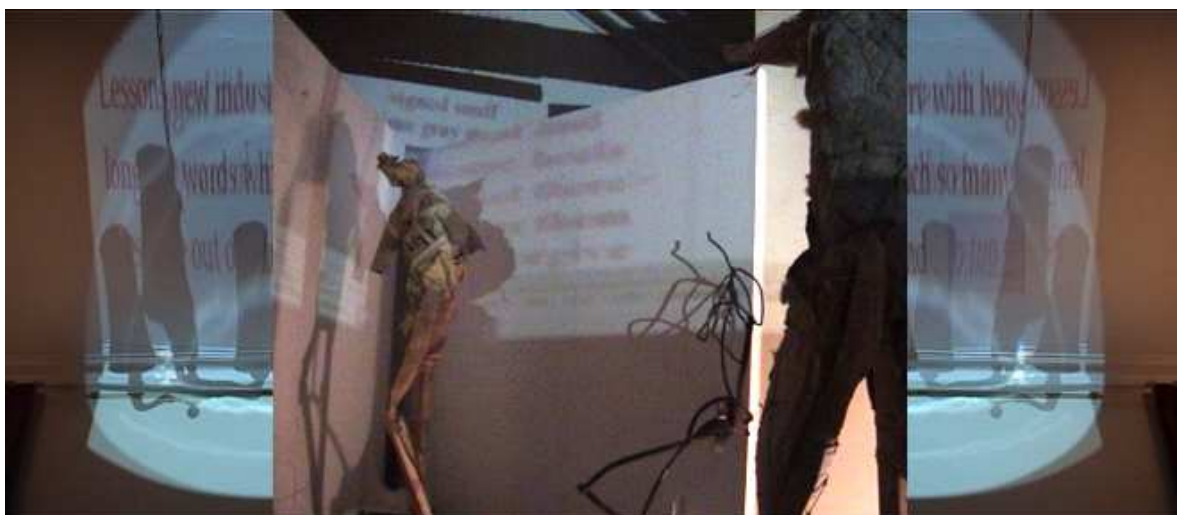
The closest I find in contemporary works is Bruce Nauman's sound collage installed at Tate's Turbine Hall in 2004. A visitor would walk between bands of sound, recorded texts, audibility of each decreasing and increasing as you move through the Hall, twenty texts is total. Much like metacommunication, Bruce may be asking the audience to discern between varying messages or to just experience the audible installation and the relationship between sounds.

A final investigation brings me to Arte Povera. Here the physical presence and behaviour have themselves become art. Assemblages of signifying signs are divorced from an object's

historical meaning. A belief in technicism has been replaced by the belief in the creative process. The arrangement of space becomes less in importance than the activity of making. Object resigns to subject. Deprived of illusions "nothing else could be done." Beckett's *Estrogen*, in *Waiting for Godot*, repeats "Nothing to be done", as the two primary characters wait for some hope in their hopeless situation. The wind is knocked right out of my sails just as I approach



the island of language and realize - it's a mirage. Here I am with my luggage of laptop, data projector, microphone and "what's to be done?" Using the offerings from Dada, Arte Povera, Samuel Beckett, Concrete Poetry, I'll explore and see if this stream of consciousness has any fish in it. Wherever I can find a power source, an audience, and dim light in the final weeks of this activity, I'll pay attention to this projected material I grabbed from the studio's offerings. For now, there isn't an explanation through language for this material kleptomania of translated voices, a dues ex machine, of communicating. The figures, with their non-verbal body language, made from waste, speak clear enough for themselves - for myself.



-
- 4 Wijers, L. (1993) "Fluxus Today and Yesterday, An Artist's Impression" in Hodges, N. and Khambatta, R. (Eds) *FLUXUS Today and Yesterday*, Academy Group Ltd. p.7
 - 5 Coles, P. (2004) *Phyllida Barlow Peninsula*, Baltic p.48
 - 6 Coles, P. (2004) *Phyllida Barlow Peninsula*, Baltic p.11
 - 7 Coles, P. (2004) *Phyllida Barlow Peninsula*, Baltic p.19
 - 8 Auping, M. (2003) *Philip Guston Retrospective*, Thames & Hudson p.19
 - 9 Auping, M. (2003) *Philip Guston Retrospective*, Thames & Hudson p.79
 - 10 Auping, M. (2003) *Philip Guston Retrospective*, Thames & Hudson p.37
 - 11 Auping, M. (2003) *Philip Guston Retrospective*, Thames & Hudson p.50
 - 12 Auping, M. (2003) *Philip Guston Retrospective*, Thames & Hudson p.50
 - 13 Auping, M. (2003) *Philip Guston Retrospective*, Thames & Hudson p.50
 - 14 Auping, M. (2003) *Philip Guston Retrospective*, Thames & Hudson p.51
 - 15 Auping, M. (2003) *Philip Guston Retrospective*, Thames & Hudson p.91
 - 16 Jones, C. (1990) *Bay Area Figurative Art* University of California Press p.1
 - 17 Jones, C. (1990) *Bay Area Figurative Art* University of California Press p.1
 - 18 Jones, C. (1990) *Bay Area Figurative Art* University of California Press p.1
 - 19 Auping, M. (2003) *Philip Guston Retrospective*, Thames & Hudson p.55
 - 20 Jones, C. (1990) *Bay Area Figurative Art* University of California Press p.1-2
 - 21 Auping, M. (2003) *Philip Guston Retrospective*, Thames & Hudson p.56
 - 22 Jones, C. (1990) *Bay Area Figurative Art* University of California Press p.184
 - 23 Jones, C. (1990) *Bay Area Figurative Art* University of California Press p.3
 - 24 Jones, C. (1990) *Bay Area Figurative Art* University of California Press p.21
 - 25 Jones, C. (1990) *Bay Area Figurative Art* University of California Press p.129
 - 26 Jones, C. (1990) *Bay Area Figurative Art* University of California Press p.136
 - 27 Jones, C. (1990) *Bay Area Figurative Art* University of California Press p.137
 - 28 Auping, M. (2003) *Philip Guston Retrospective*, Thames & Hudson p.49
 - 29 Warner, M. (2001) *Monuments and Maidens*, University of California Press p.17
 - 30 Helfenstein, J. (2007) *Robert Rauschenberg, Cardboards and Related Pieces*, Menil Foundation, Inc p.17
 - 31 Helfenstein, J. (2007) *Robert Rauschenberg, Cardboards and Related Pieces*, Menil Foundation, Inc p.11
 - 32 Auping, M. (2003) *Philip Guston Retrospective*, Thames & Hudson p.48
 - 33 Nabokov, V. (1967) *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited*, Random House. p.1
 - 34 Peppiatt, M. (2001) *Alberto Giacometti in Postwar Paris*, Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts p.9
 - 35 Sartre, J.P. (1948) *The Search for the Absolute* in Pierre Matisse Gallery Exhibition Catalog p.6
 - 36 Sartre, J.P. (1948) *The Search for the Absolute* in Pierre Matisse Gallery Exhibition Catalog p.4
 - 37 Auping, M. (2003) *Philip Guston Retrospective*, Thames & Hudson p.6
 - 38 Auping, M. (2003) *Philip Guston Retrospective*, Thames & Hudson p.18
 - 39 See Auping, M. (2003) *Philip Guston Retrospective*, Thames & Hudson p.38
 - 40 Auping, M. (2003) *Philip Guston Retrospective*, Thames & Hudson p.21
 - 41 Auping, M. (2003) *Philip Guston Retrospective*, Thames & Hudson p.86
 - 42 Auping, M. (2003) *Philip Guston Retrospective*, Thames & Hudson p.95
 - 43 Jones, C. (1990) *Bay Area Figurative Art*, University of California Press p.101
 - 44 Sartre, J.P. (1948) *The Search for the Absolute* in Pierre Matisse Gallery Exhibition Catalog p.11
 - 45 Auping, M. (2003) *Philip Guston Retrospective*, Thames & Hudson p.5
 - 46 Cobley, P., (1996) "Visual Meaning" in Cobley, P. (Ed.) *The Communication Theory Reader*, Routledge p.126
 - 47 Schimmel, J., (2000) *An Interview with Juan Munoz*
<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/042901.html> accessed 18/5/2007
 - 48 Sluzki, C., Ransom, D., (1976) *Double Bind, The Foundation of the Communicational Approach to the Family*, Grune & Stratton. pp.151-164
 - 49 Gibson, J. (2006) "Interpreting Words, Interpreting Worlds" in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 64:4 Fall 2006, Temple University. P.443
 - 50 Hentschel, M. <http://www.artchive.com/artchive/G/guston.html> accessed 20/07/2007

-
- ⁵¹ Wijers, L. (1993) *Fluxus Yesterday and Tomorrow*, Academy Group Ltd p.8
- ⁵² Wijers, L. (1993) *Fluxus Yesterday and Tomorrow*, Academy Group Ltd p. 8
- ⁵³ Wijers, L. (1993) *Fluxus Yesterday and Tomorrow*, Academy Group Ltd p.13